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**Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People**

# Programme of work for 2008

## I. Mandate of the Committee

1. The mandate of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for 2008 is contained in General Assembly resolutions 62/80, 62/81 and 62/82 of 10 December 2007.

2. In its resolution 62/80, entitled "Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People", the General Assembly expressed its appreciation to the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for its efforts in performing the tasks assigned to it by the Assembly and took note of its annual report,[1] including the conclusions and valuable recommendations contained in chapter VII thereof, requested it to continue to exert all efforts to promote the realization of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, to support the Middle East peace process and to mobilize international support for and assistance to the Palestinian people and authorized it to make such adjustments in its approved programme of work as it might consider appropriate and necessary in the light of developments and to report thereon to the Assembly at its sixty-third session and thereafter. It also requested the Committee to continue to keep under review the situation relating to the question of Palestine and to report and make suggestions to the Assembly, the Security Council or the Secretary-General, as appropriate. It requested the Committee to continue to extend its cooperation and support to Palestinian and other civil society organizations and to continue to involve additional civil society organizations in its work in order to mobilize international solidarity and support for the Palestinian people, particularly during this critical period of humanitarian hardship, with the overall aim of promoting the achievement by the Palestinian people of its inalienable rights and a peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine. The Assembly requested the United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine and other United Nations bodies associated with the question of Palestine to continue to cooperate fully with the Committee and to make available to it, at its request, the relevant information and documentation which they have at their disposal. The Assembly also requested the Secretary-General to

[1] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Sixty-second Session, Supplement No. 35* (A/62/35).

circulate the report of the Committee to all competent bodies of the United Nations and urged them to take the necessary action, as appropriate.

3. In its resolution 62/81, entitled "Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat", the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to continue to provide the Division with the necessary resources and to ensure that it continue to carry out its programme of work as detailed in the relevant earlier resolutions, in consultation with the Committee and under its guidance, including, in particular, the monitoring of developments relevant to the question of Palestine, the organization of international meetings and conferences in various regions with the participation of all sectors of the international community, liaison and cooperation with civil society, the further development and expansion of the documents collection of the United Nations Information System on the Question of Palestine (UNISPAL), the preparation and widest possible dissemination of publications and information materials on various aspects of the question of Palestine and the conduct of the annual training programme for staff of the Palestinian Authority. The Assembly also requested the Division, as part of the observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People on 29 November, to continue to organize, under the guidance of the Committee, an annual exhibit on Palestinian rights or a cultural event in cooperation with the Permanent Observer Mission of Palestine to the United Nations and encouraged Member States to continue to give the widest support and publicity to the observance of the Day of Solidarity.

4. In its resolution 62/82, entitled "Special information programme on the question of Palestine of the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat", the General Assembly requested the Department, in full cooperation and coordination with the Committee, to continue, with the necessary flexibility as may be required by developments affecting the question of Palestine, its special information programme for the biennium 2008-2009, and outlined a number of specific activities to be carried out under the programme.

5. The Committee has reviewed the various aspects of its own programme of work and that of the Division for Palestinian Rights, as well as of the mandates governing them. It will continue to make adjustments in this programme in the course of 2008 in order to enhance its responsiveness to developments in the peace process and the situation on the ground, as well as to increase its effectiveness in promoting the exercise by the Palestinian people of its inalienable rights.

## II. The situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem

6. The Committee emphasized in its report to the General Assembly at its sixty-second session that the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian Territory was the root cause of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. For 40 years, the occupying Power has systematically altered the Palestinian land by implementing its illegal policy of building settlements and, more recently, constructing a wall in the West Bank, including in and around East Jerusalem. Continued closures, the sealing-off of the Gaza Strip, unrelenting Israeli incursions into Palestinian population centres and the humiliating system of checkpoints throughout the West Bank have had an extremely destructive effect on the lives of the Palestinian people and have rendered the Palestinian Authority nearly dysfunctional. The situation has further deteriorated

owing to the polarization within Palestinian society, which led, in June 2007, to an armed takeover of Palestinian Authority institutions in the Gaza Strip by Hamas forces. The Committee calls upon Israel to end its military operations in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and to stop any other measures that further undermine Palestinian institutions. It again reminds Israel, the occupying Power, that it is bound by the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, which obliges parties to the Convention to protect civilians during hostilities. The applicability of that Convention to the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, has been repeatedly confirmed by the General Assembly and the Security Council. Israel must release, immediately and unconditionally, all imprisoned Cabinet members and parliamentarians, as well as other Palestinian prisoners, including women and children. The Committee strongly condemns the killing of innocent civilians by either side. The Committee is strongly opposed to the expansion of settlements in the West Bank and the construction of the wall. The Committee reiterates its position of principle that these activities are contrary to international humanitarian law and numerous resolutions of the Security Council and the General Assembly, adopted since 1967, the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice of July 2004 and the provisions of the road map. Israel must cease and reverse all illegal actions in the Palestinian Territory it has occupied since 1967. The Committee is encouraged by the establishment of the United Nations Register of Damage Caused by the Construction of the Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, enabling it to commence the mandated work.

7. The Committee expressed concern at the continuation by Israel of illegal settlement activities and the construction of the wall in and around East Jerusalem. These activities are further isolating the city from the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory and further fragmenting the territory and destroying its unity, contiguity and integrity. The construction is also having a detrimental impact on the lives of Palestinians, gravely affecting their socio-economic situation and displacing thousands and prejudging a permanent status agreement on Jerusalem. The Committee reiterates that resolving the question of Jerusalem is indispensable for achieving a two-State solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which should take fully into account the legitimate concerns of both sides.

8. The Committee is deeply concerned about the worsening economic and social conditions, the humanitarian emergency and the increasing isolation of the Gaza Strip, which are increasing tensions and instability and provide fertile ground for the radicalization of parts of the Palestinian population. Owing to the continued imposition of prolonged closures by Israel, the Gaza Strip remains isolated from other parts of the Palestinian Territory, so that only basic humanitarian goods are allowed to enter. The situation was exacerbated by the decision of the Government of Israel in September 2007 to declare the Gaza Strip "hostile territory" and to apply additional sanctions, including reducing the supply of such vital services as fuel and electricity and completely obstructing access to food, medicine and other humanitarian supplies. In the West Bank, normal life is being disrupted by routine Israeli military operations, hundreds of checkpoints, the settlements infrastructure, the construction of the wall and periodic closures. Economic activity throughout the Palestinian Territory has been stifled. The Committee, in that regard, emphasizes the critical importance of international donor assistance for the functioning of the Palestinian institutions at this time of crisis. It urges the international donor community to continue its assistance programmes and to address, with fresh

thinking, the rapidly worsening humanitarian situation. It is encouraged by the results of the donor conference held in Paris in December 2007.

9. The Committee calls upon the Palestinian leadership, the leaders of all factions and all Palestinians to unite in support of President Abbas, his government and all democratically elected Palestinian institutions and to resolve their political differences by peaceful means. The Committee calls for the restoration of the situation in the Gaza Strip to that which existed prior to the events of June and for measures to be taken to preserve the territorial unity and integrity of the Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. The Committee firmly believes that the unity of the Palestinian people is an essential condition for achieving a viable resolution of the question of Palestine. The Committee supports national dialogue among Palestinians to achieve national reconciliation. The Committee reiterates its long-standing position that the Palestine Liberation Organization is the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people in any negotiations aimed at resolving the question of Palestine by peaceful means.

10. The Committee reiterates that only a negotiated solution can bring about the goal of a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine through the establishment of two States, Israel and Palestine, based on the 1967 borders. A settlement should be based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 1397 (2002) and 1515 (2003) in particular, and other relevant resolutions. It is incumbent on the Security Council to ensure the speedy and full implementation of its own resolutions. The Council should decide on effective steps to protect the civilian population, end hostilities and guide the parties, with the active involvement of the Quartet and regional partners, to a negotiated settlement.

11. The Committee is encouraged by international efforts to relaunch the peace process. It welcomed the holding of the Annapolis conference as a pivotal point for relaunching permanent status negotiations aimed at ending the occupation and establishing a viable Palestinian State in all the areas occupied by Israel in 1967, including East Jerusalem, living side by side with Israel and its neighbours in peace and security. The Committee is of the view that it is critically important for the parties not to lose the current momentum and to move forward to addressing all permanent status issues, without exception, namely, borders, Jerusalem, refugees, settlements, security, and water resources. If success is to be achieved, it will be necessary to reach concrete performance-based agreements relating to those issues and to establish a timeline for their implementation. Any diplomatic process needs to be buttressed by urgent and meaningful steps on the ground, including confidence-building measures. The continued support of the international community is crucial for advancing the process, namely, a consistent and sustainable dialogue between the Quartet and the parties, and the inclusion of regional partners. The Arab Peace Initiative also remains an important element for advancing peace in the region and should be seized upon. States Members of the European Union are encouraged to take a more proactive role in international efforts at resolving the conflict. The Committee welcomes the outcome of the Paris donors' conference as a much-needed demonstration by the international donor community of its support for the establishment of a viable Palestinian State.

12. The Committee reaffirms that the United Nations should play an active and facilitating role in these efforts and maintain its permanent responsibility with respect to all aspects of the question of Palestine, until it is resolved in all its aspects

in conformity with relevant United Nations resolutions and norms of international law. As requested by the General Assembly, the Committee will continue to keep the situation under review and to promote a constructive analysis and discussion of these issues by the international community.

## III. Priority issues in the programme of work of the Committee for 2008

13. The Committee is of the view that its programme of activities, mandated by the General Assembly, contributes to focusing the attention of Governments, intergovernmental and civil society organizations and the general public on issues crucial for advancing a peaceful settlement of the conflict. The Committee noted rising international awareness of the fact that a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the region would remain elusive until the national rights of the Palestinian people have been realized. In addition, there appears to be greater realization that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is one of the major factors underlying the rift between Western and Islamic societies. Throughout 2008, its work will remain focused on promoting a better understanding, as gauged by international public opinion, of the importance of the achievement by the Palestinian people of its inalienable rights, namely the right to self-determination, the right to an independent, sovereign State and the right of return, as well as the urgency of achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting solution of the question of Palestine.

14. As in previous years, the Committee will maintain its support of the Palestinian people and the political process through a variety of activities. In 2008, the Committee will pay special attention to assessing the situation on the ground and supporting the creation of a climate conducive to the advancement of permanent status negotiations between the parties, including the complete cessation of all acts of violence, such as military attacks, destruction and acts of terror. The Committee will highlight the responsibility of the occupying Power for ending its illegal policies and practices, such as the settlement activity, the construction of the wall and various measures of collective punishment. The Committee will maintain its support for revitalized and active international involvement, including through the Quartet, the regional partners and the continued personal engagement of the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process. The Committee will, in particular, emphasize the need for third-party monitoring of performance-based agreements and encourage innovative thinking in that regard by the parties and the international community, including the United Nations. The Committee will also focus on issues relating to alleviating the humanitarian crisis in the Palestinian Territory, stimulating Palestinian economic recovery and urging an increase in international assistance to the Palestinian people. It will lay special emphasis on raising international awareness of the plight of Palestinian women and children — the most vulnerable segment of Palestinian society — suffering as a result of the occupation.

15. The Committee attaches great importance to enhancing cooperation and coordination between the Department of Public Information and the Division for Palestinian Rights in the implementation of their respective mandates. In its resolution 62/82, the General Assembly requested the Department, inter alia, to expand its collection of audio-visual material on the question of Palestine and to

continue the production and preservation of such material and the updating of the exhibit in the General Assembly building. The Committee will continue to cooperate with the Department in carrying out the various mandated activities.

# IV. Activities of the Committee and the Division for Palestinian Rights

## A. Action by the Committee

16. In pursuance of its mandate, the Committee will continue to keep under review the situation relating to the question of Palestine and participate in relevant meetings of the General Assembly and the Security Council. The Committee will also continue to monitor the situation on the ground and draw the attention of the international community to urgent developments in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, requiring international action.

17. The Committee, through its Bureau, will continue to participate in relevant intergovernmental and other conferences and meetings, as necessary. The Committee considers this activity an important aspect of its work in promotion of international support for the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people.

18. In cooperation with the Permanent Observer Mission of Palestine to the United Nations, the Committee will continue to maintain contacts with the Palestine Liberation Organization, the Palestinian Authority and other institutions, including civil society, in the areas under its jurisdiction and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. Following the practice of previous years, the Committee will continue to invite Palestinian officials and other Palestinian personalities to meetings with members and observers of the Committee and the Secretariat, as appropriate.

19. The Bureau of the Committee will continue consultations with Governments and intergovernmental organizations interested in its programme of work. These exchanges should help promote understanding of the mandate and objectives of the Committee.

## B. International meetings and conferences

20. The Committee considers that its programme of international meetings and conferences contributes to focusing the attention of Governments, intergovernmental and civil society organizations and the general public on current issues and the need for advancing a peaceful settlement of the conflict and encouraging dialogue in this regard. The meetings should also contribute to raising international awareness of the root cause of the conflict, namely the occupation by Israel of the Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and to mobilizing international support for efforts to resolve the conflict in a just and comprehensive manner. These events highlight the most pressing concerns, such as the need to end violence, protect the civilian population, stop settlement activities and the construction of the wall and improve the living conditions of the Palestinian population. The Committee highly appreciates the involvement in these meetings of Governments, intergovernmental organizations, entities of the United Nations

system and civil society. It encourages them to continue and increase the level of engagement and support for a just solution to the conflict. The Committee will continue to carry out this programme to foster support for the attainment by the Palestinian people of its inalienable rights in accordance with international legitimacy. The Committee, through its Bureau, will regularly assess the outcomes of the international meetings and conferences and, where required, decide on steps that could be taken to enhance their contribution to the mandated goals of the Committee.

21. In its programme of meetings for 2008, the Committee intends to address issues such as creating a climate conducive to the holding and advancement of permanent status negotiations; the responsibility of all Governments to apply international law to all aspects of the question of Palestine; the sixtieth anniversary of the Nakba; the need to find a just solution to the Palestine refugee issue; the impact of settlement expansion and the construction of the wall on efforts to achieve a two-State solution; the need to uphold international humanitarian law, including the Fourth Geneva Convention; the critical situation in the Gaza Strip; the need to alleviate humanitarian and socio-economic hardships, including the plight of Palestinian women and children; and continuing efforts by civil society to build an effective international solidarity movement.

22. In 2008, the Committee, in cooperation with prospective host countries, organizations and relevant Secretariat services, will do its utmost to ensure the success of its programme of meetings and conferences. In so doing, it will keep in mind the need for economy and the most cost-effective utilization of resources. The Committee will continue to make an effort to encourage participation by countries and organizations that so far have not engaged fully in its programme of work.

23. The Committee intends to organize the following international meetings and conferences in 2008:

- United Nations Seminar on Assistance to the Palestinian People, February 2008, Amman.
- United Nations International Meeting in Support of Israeli-Palestinian Peace. The meeting will be followed by consultations of the Committee delegation with civil society organizations.
- United Nations Latin American and Caribbean Meeting on the Question of Palestine. The meeting will be followed by a civil society event in solidarity with the Palestinian people.
- United Nations International Conference of Civil Society in Support of Israeli-Palestinian peace.

## C. Cooperation with civil society

### Civil society organizations

24. The Committee commends civil society organizations for their efforts to uphold international legitimacy with regard to the question of Palestine through advocacy and mobilizing public opinion, as well as for their humanitarian and assistance initiatives aimed at alleviating the suffering of the Palestinian people and improving their living conditions. The Committee welcomes initiatives aimed at

promoting the implementation of relevant United Nations resolutions. The Committee encourages civil society organizations to broaden their base by involving trade unions and other organizations and to focus and harmonize their advocacy efforts at the local, national, regional and international levels with respect to the legal obligations of Governments, including parliaments, as regards the question of Palestine. It supports recent civil society initiatives, including in developing countries, to establish umbrella mechanisms to better coordinate their work. The Committee also backs all humanitarian and assistance initiatives geared towards improving the daily lives of the Palestinians. The Committee considers that it is particularly important to build bridges of understanding and trust between the Israeli and Palestinian civil societies and to promote common goals of peace between the two peoples.

25. The Committee intends to continue to invite civil society organizations to all international meetings and conferences organized under its auspices. At these events, it will encourage them to discuss their own initiatives and campaigns and to exchange views and ideas on issues of mutual interest. The participation of Governments and intergovernmental and civil society organizations in such meetings and conferences should offer a unique opportunity to develop and strengthen initiatives by all strata of the international community, with a view to achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In particular, in wishing to promote the Israeli-Palestinian dialogue, the Committee looks forward to productive and mutually beneficial engagement by Israeli and Palestinian participants in events organized under its auspices.

26. The Committee will maintain and further develop its liaison with national, regional and international coordinating mechanisms on the question of Palestine, in addition to the established liaison with a large number of individual civil society organizations. It will continue to accredit new organizations. Periodic meetings for consultations with civil society representatives will contribute to the further enhancement of the Committee's programme of cooperation with civil society.

27. The Committee is of the view that it is important to continue to exchange information with civil society on respective current and planned activities. The Committee requests the Division to obtain information and report periodically on civil society initiatives in order to enhance the interaction between civil society and the Committee. It also requests the Division to continue to develop and regularly update its Internet website on the activities of civil society organizations on the question of Palestine (www.un.org/Depts/dpa/ngo) as a tool for the exchange of information and communication between the United Nations and civil society.

28. In 2008, the resources available for cooperation with civil society will be used for the following activities:

(a) Organization, whenever appropriate and feasible, of meetings of civil society organizations in conjunction with international meetings and conferences held under the auspices of the Committee;

(b) Participation of representatives of the Committee and the Division in important forums and other events on the question of Palestine organized by civil society organizations;

(c) Periodic meetings for consultations with various civil society organizations with a view to briefing them on the activities of the Committee,

encouraging better coordination and cooperation among them and with the Committee and other relevant United Nations entities, and receiving their views on the work of the United Nations and the Committee in particular;

(d) Providing assistance to Palestinian civil society organizations in facilitating participation of their representatives in meetings held under the auspices of the Committee or supported by the Committee.

**Parliaments and inter-parliamentary organizations**

29. The Committee believes that national parliaments and inter-parliamentary organizations play an important role in shaping public opinion, formulating policy guidelines and upholding international legitimacy in support of a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine. The Committee is of the view that the experience and political influence of lawmakers and their organizations can be instrumental in consolidating the democratic process and institution-building in the territory under the Palestinian Authority, strengthening political dialogue between the parties and applying the principles of international law to efforts aimed at resolving the conflict. The Committee reaffirms the continuing importance of developing closer cooperation with parliaments and representatives of inter-parliamentary bodies in order to encourage the discussion within the respective parliaments and among all strata of society of ways of supporting peace in the Middle East and resolving the question of Palestine. To that end, the Committee will strive to involve parliamentarians and representatives of inter-parliamentary organizations in international conferences and meetings organized under its auspices. Consultations between the Committee and representatives of parliaments and inter-parliamentary organizations, notably the Inter-Parliamentary Union, should improve cooperation between the two sides. The Committee will also make an effort to involve members of the Knesset and the Palestinian Legislative Council in events organized under its auspices.

## D. United Nations Information System on the Question of Palestine

30. The Committee requests the Division for Palestinian Rights to continue its work on the further development, expansion and administration of UNISPAL and the related website on the question of Palestine at the United Nations. The Division will make an effort to launch a portal for the sites, designed under the guidance of the Bureau, and will continue to redesign the various web pages of the sites. The Division will continue to ensure that the UNISPAL collection of United Nations and related documents is comprehensive and up to date and that its access modalities and displays are user-friendly. The Committee requests the Division to report periodically to the Bureau on the status of work accomplished on the system and progress achieved in its development.

## E. Publications programme

31. The Committee considers the Division's publications programme to be an important information source and outreach activity which contributes to the heightening of international awareness of the various aspects of the question of Palestine, the involvement of the United Nations and the work of the Committee and

its mandate and objectives. The Division should continue to monitor developments relevant to the question of Palestine. It should also continue to issue the following publications in a timely manner:

- Monthly bulletin on action by the United Nations system and intergovernmental organizations relevant to the question of Palestine.
- Periodic review of developments relating to the Middle East peace process.
- Monthly chronological review of events relating to the question of Palestine.
- Annual compilation of resolutions and decisions of the General Assembly and the Security Council relating to the question of Palestine.
- Reports of international meetings and conferences held under the auspices of the Committee.
- Annual bulletin on the observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.
- Bimonthly summary of information on civil society activities on the question of Palestine (NGO Action News).

32. The Committee believes that the Division, in consultation with the Bureau, should continue to review the existing publications and make proposals with regard to those that require updating.

## F. Other activities of the Division for Palestinian Rights

### Training programme for staff of the Palestinian Authority

33. The Committee considers that, in the light of its importance and usefulness to the Palestinian Authority, the Division should continue the training programme in 2008. The Committee is of the view that, in selecting candidates for this annual programme, special consideration should be given to achieving gender balance.

### Observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People

34. In accordance with General Assembly resolution 32/40 B of 2 December 1977, the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People will be observed on Monday, 1 December 2008. It is envisaged that special meetings in observance of the Day will be held at United Nations Headquarters, at the United Nations Offices at Geneva and Vienna and elsewhere, in accordance with established practice. For 29 November 2008, a Palestinian exhibit or a cultural event will be organized at United Nations Headquarters in cooperation with the Permanent Observer Mission of Palestine to the United Nations.

35. The Committee will continue to review and assess its programme of work in the light of the situation on the ground and new developments in the political process, and will make adjustments as necessary.